

Wildflowers and Twine by **Luddleston**

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Summary:

It's a regular night in the Hanged Man when Carver learns that Merrill may be sweet, but she's not innocent, by any means.

Merrill is into rope bondage, Carver is into the idea of Merrill tying him up.

Wildflowers and Twine

Author's Note:

Hello, I just finished playing dragon age II for the second time and I would like to announce that I have a vested interest in:

1. Carver bottoming
2. Merrill being much kinkier than anyone gives her credit for

bon appetit

Merrill might be the sweetest person Carver's ever met.

It's not just that she says nice things (but she does) or is pleasant to people (but she is) or has good manners (debatable, but he thinks by Dalish standards she has). Merrill is kind even to the meanest bastards on the streets of Lowtown. She feeds the stray kittens who live in the alley by her home and says she's going to train them to be the best mousers in Kirkwall. She compliments people on weird things, tells Garrett his hair looks fluffy like a baby halla, tells Carver the horrible sunburn he got makes his eyes look bluer.

She's just sweet, okay?

The others think it's funny. Merrill's bad at Wicked Grace but it's way too easy to talk her into *strip* Wicked Grace, because she says that betting on nudity isn't *betting* anything. Or isn't betting anything *important*. She's completely unselfconscious even when she's the first one to lose all her clothes (which she always is, she's *really bad*) and Carver has to look at a wall so he doesn't stare at her sitting there as usual with her legs crossed and her bright eyes fixed on the hand she's accidentally showing half the table, except she's completely stark naked.

She has more tattoos than just on her face.

Carver thinks it's maybe a Dalish thing, that they don't worry about being naked in front of people. It can't be that Merrill knows exactly how people are looking at her. You have to explain *innuendos* to her, for the Maker's sake. Sometimes she laughs along with everyone else, but Carver swears that's just because everybody else is laughing and she gets the giggles when other people start, not because she's caught on to what you mean.

It feels bad to say things like that in front of her without explanation, but it's not like Carver's gonna explain when he trips up. Can you *imagine*? He'd blush so bad Merrill would ask if he was sunburned again.

It's a regular night in the Hanged Man when Carver learns that Merrill may be sweet, but she's not *innocent*, by any means.

Varric is telling Fenris a story that feels wildly fabricated, Garrett is making calf eyes at that scruffy apostate, the scruffy apostate has a hand on Garrett's *thigh* (disgusting) and Aveline is either late or not coming. Merrill and Isabela are seated closest to the fire, with Merrill's bare feet kicking back and forth because she's tiny and the chair is just a little too tall to let her sit with her heels flat on the ground.

Carver joins them, because he doesn't want Varric to rope him into his insane story and he *really* doesn't want to look at Garrett and Anders flirting. He's much taller than Merrill, so his feet are flat on the floor even when he's slouching in his chair, frowning a little as he tries to figure out what the hell they're talking about.

At first, Carver thinks they're having a conversation about the Dalish language, and why Isabela's taken a sudden interest in that is beyond him. Merrill says an elvhen word, and Isabela repeats it with the Rivaini accent that sometimes slips out of her mouth curling it into something particularly intriguing.

"And what's that one mean?" Isabela asks.

"That's one for when there's three people," Merrill says, holding up three fingers (but it's her thumb and her first two fingers on her opposite hand), "and the one in the middle is sort of like a bridge—that's what the word

means, 'bridge'. The two on either side are up sort of like this—" she holds two hands parallel, trying to describe something Carver can't possibly intuit, until she says, "—and they're pleasuring the person in the front orally while the person in the back does the penetration bit."

Carver sinks slowly back into his chair, covering his face to hide his flush, because apparently they're talking about the elvhen words for *sex positions*.

"And that other one you said?" Isabela says, and then repeats another elvhen word for something probably just as salacious.

"Oh! That is when somebody is capable of orally pleasuring themselves. Although I don't think that anybody can actually do that. I think it's just a rumor."

"I don't know, Kitten." Isabela leans back in her chair, her feet kicked up on a sawn-off barrel turned upside-down for a stool, arms folded beneath her chest to make her chest stand out more. "I've met some elves who are *very* flexible."

"Maybe if they were a contortionist," Merrill amends. And then, because the Maker and his bride personally decided they hate Carver and want to make his life feel as if it's constantly falling into the Void, she says, "Carver, are you all right? You look a little bit peaky."

"He's fine, love," Isabela answers for him. "Our soft, innocent Carver just gets his feathers a bit ruffled by such lustful conversation, I imagine."

"Shut up," Carver says, hiding his face behind a sip of his drink that makes his nose wrinkle even more than their topic of conversation does. Maker, what did Corff put in this? "I'm not *innocent*." More innocent than Merrill was, apparently. *Carver* certainly wouldn't talk about such things in mixed company, but Garrett's friends probably didn't count as 'mixed company' anyway.

So what? Carver was raised with manners. And for him, they actually stuck, unlike some ill-mannered brothers of his.

"It's perfectly all right if you are!" says *Merrill*, of all people, the one everybody thinks is a pure little daisy. "Everybody goes about these things in their own time, it's ab-so-lutely *fine* if you're still a virgin."

"I am *not*—!" The fact that Carver puts so much stress on the word that his voice cracks probably doesn't help make him seem any more than his nineteen years. He surreptitiously checks over his shoulder to make sure Garrett hasn't caught him acting a fool. Garrett is leaning in close to talk into Anders' ear, which is a nauseating contrast to a pretty girl asking him about his perceived lack of sexual experience.

"Do tell," Isabela says, uncrossing her arms so she can lean on the arm of her chair, her attention and her eyes on Carver.

"What—there's not much to tell."

"There's plenty," Isabela argues. "Man or woman? Was this a sweetheart you left behind in Ferelden, or a one-time fling? Or have you been patronizing the Rose...?"

"No." He's been in the Rose all of once, thought maybe he would have a drink and see what happened, and then he ran into *Gamlen*, which made him want to die, and then Gamlen said, "*I won't tell your mother if you won't,*" and Carver turned right the hell around because the only other option was swooning like a lady with the vapors. Flee or go unconscious. "It was—alright, so, before the battle at Ostagar, tensions were heavy, we all thought we were going to die, but nobody wanted to drink, and so people sort of... paired off."

"A handsome soldier, then," Isabela says, with a smirk.

"You don't have to tell us if you'd rather not," Merrill adds, but she's leaning in, interested, her feet folded up in her lap and her fingers looped around her birdlike ankles.

Carver has another sip of the poison that passed for refreshment in this forsaken city. "There *were* women in the army, Isabela."

"Women can be handsome," Isabela says.

"Well, whatever. It wasn't a bloke, is all I'm saying," Carver says. "Not that anything's wrong with that." In point of fact, he's always thought Garrett was sort of lucky he could just invite boys over to the house and fool around with them in the hay loft and Mother never suspected a thing. "I don't know how to—I mean, we just sort of, you know. It was fast. A bit frantic. We both thought we might not live to see the next day. Just wanted to feel something, I suppose."

Isabela gives a low hum that's all-too-pleased, and Merrill nods understandingly.

"Ve-ry interesting. Some people, you know, they *like* feeling that way even when there's not an army or a war coming on. There's sort of a rush your body gets when it thinks it's in danger," Merrill says.

"Knew a man once who got off on me threatening him at knifepoint," Isabela adds.

"That *does* sound intriguing! I prefer restraints, myself." Merrill makes a quick motion with her hands like she's tying a knot.

This is some absolutely *wild* shit. Revelatory. "What, so like, you have somebody tie you up while you...?" he asks, telling himself that if it's an unwanted question he'll blame the drink.

"Oh, no, not exactly," Merrill says. "I *usually* would rather be the one *doing* the restraining. I'm quite good with rope, you know."

Carver feels warm from his head to his toes, and he's pretty sure it's not the drink. All he can manage to say is, "oh."

Isabela and Merrill go back to talking about the Dalish language, except this time Isabela's getting Merrill to teach her curses, all of which sound not at all enticing and much more threatening when translated into the common tongue.

Merrill says something which sounds very beautiful and then translates it to, "*may the grass never grow to cover your ancestors' graves,*" and Carver decides this is, at least, better than them talking about sex positions.

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Carver drinks enough that he's inclined to listen to whatever bullshit Varric is spouting, which also gets him out of any more embarrassing conversation passing between Merrill and Isabela. Garrett, unfortunately, is also very interested in Varric's latest tale, which means Carver is reminded every time Garrett speaks and he looks in his direction that Anders is asleep on Garrett's shoulder and Garrett's hand is clasped with remarkable gentleness 'round Anders' waist.

Seriously, of *all* his friends, Garrett's gone for the holier-than-thou bastard who's always looking down his nose at everybody even though *he's* an apostate *and* an abomination? It's rich, is what it is.

They break into idle conversation after Varric finishes the tale, and Varric comes around behind Carver, claspings his shoulder. "Hey, Junior. Walk Daisy home, why don't you? She looks like she's about to fall asleep too, and I doubt Hawke can carry both of them."

Garrett probably could, but only because Merrill and Anders are both tiny. Carver probably could, too, he'd just never want to get that close to Anders.

He agrees to walk Merrill home—this is a duty one of them takes on every night, partly to protect Merrill from Kirkwall, and partly to protect Kirkwall from Merrill. Carver doesn't mind walking Merrill home, even though Kirkwall smells worse than usual at this time of night.

Merrill's always making Lowtown look like less of a shithole when you see it through her eyes. She splashes in puddles even though every puddle in Kirkwall is deeply suspicious and she has no shoes on. She says all the lanterns lit at night look pretty, even though half of them are red. She hums while she walks and when Carver goes a half-step behind her, she slows down enough to loop her arm through his.

"I'm *dreadfully* sorry if Isabela and I made you uncomfortable with our little conversation back there," she says.

Carver just brushes it off. "You didn't. It's fine."

"I *did*, though, and I'm sorry. I just forget, sometimes, shemlen are very strange about things of a sexual nature—especially when I'm talking to Isabela, I forget, because she's so very *normal* about it all."

Carver is starting to think the Dalish aren't all elfroot and butterflies.

Especially if they think *Isabela* is *normal* about sex.

Merrill's still rambling. "And I know people often don't want to talk about something they're not interested in, in that sort of manner. A... how did Isabela put it? A turn-off, if you will."

"It's not," Carver says, before he can rein in his tongue, "a turn-off."

She hugs his arm a little closer to her. He can feel the texture of her chainmail against his skin. "It's not?"

"No. It's. I. *Maker*." He wishes he'd not had that last drink. "You were right, about the danger. The rush. People liking that. *I* liked that. I mean, I didn't like being half-certain I was gonna die, but..."

"But you might enjoy it if you knew you were safe, but your body was put under that sort of pressure?" she suggests.

"Maybe?" It's more a question than an answer.

"You don't *have* to like it, Carver," she says. He likes when she says his name, she turns the Rs so round. "You can try it and say, 'wait, no, let's not,' if you don't."

This is a revelation in itself. Carver's always thought that once you *start*, you just sort of do it until you finish. "You'd... you'd be willing to try something like that, though? With me?"

They've reached her doorstep, and Carver's thankful that the alienage is sleepy tonight. Merrill lets go of his arm and clasps her hands behind her back, rocking onto her heels and then her toes. She looks well pleased with his suggestion. "I *would*, yes," she says. "But not tonight, I'm ve-ry sleepy. And not tomorrow, because Hawke wants to go scouting up Sundermount for some sort of flower or bark or something he needs—and not the next day, because Anders is coming to check on the kittens. So the next-next-day."

He tries to work out what day she means, so it takes him a minute to calculate and then say, "yes, I think that would—yeah. I'll see you then." He figures later he's just going to have to ask Anders what day he's checking on the kittens and then turn up at Merrill's house the day after. Merrill's not good at following the common calendar. She thinks it'd be easier if all the rest of them learned the Dalish holidays.

"Oka-ay," she trills, another happy heel-toe bounce. "Come by after sundown, alright?" She cocks her head as if thinking, and she's *so cute*. He steps closer, as she goes on. "You're quite big, though, aren't you? I might need more rope... never mind, thinking aloud— *Carver!*"

The ways she says his name makes him think maybe he fucked all this up by leaning in like that. He jerks back, so they're no longer nose-to-nose and reflexively yelps, "sorry!"

She points a finger at his chest. "You have to *ask* before you kiss somebody," she says. "Unless—well, unless you weren't going to do that, and I've got this all wrong."

"No, you haven't." He was. "Then, uh..." he clears his throat. "May I? Kiss you?"

Heel, toe, and then a happy chirp of, "yes!"

He settles his hand on the side of her face, trying to remember how to do this after having been utterly thrown off by her pausing to make him exchange permission. "You really are tiny," he muttered, "how are you supposed to get up here, huh?"

"Not a problem." She fixes her hands to his collar and *yanks*, tugging him down until they're close enough that *she* can kiss *him*, quick and fluttery. He thinks he can feel her eyelashes against his cheek. They're very long.

It's but a moment before she pulls back, tells him goodnight, and closes the door, leaving him standing there wondering what the *fuck* just happened.

— — —

He can't stop thinking about it for three days, but at least he barely sees Merrill during that time, so he doesn't manage to say something stupid enough to make her say, '*no, actually, I'd rather not have you over to my house for something involving bondage.*'

Isabela said she's surprised he got back to the Hanged Man so fast that night, as if the two of them fucked off to, well, fuck off. Varric gave him a disturbingly knowing smile. Nobody else says or does anything about it over the next few days, save for Garrett, which only happens because he asks Carver to come flush out some bandits by the docks the night of and Carver says, "can't. I've got a date."

"With *who*?" Garrett has the nerve to look completely incredulous, as if Carver might more likely make up an imaginary date than find a real live person who was attracted to him. To be fair, it's hard to imagine a real live person being attracted to Garrett either, but Carver deals with the unfortunate existence of Anders in his general proximity so Garrett in turn ought to accept that some girls want to kiss Carver.

It's this thought that bolsters him (she *wanted* to kiss him, he *asked* and she said *yes* and when he hesitated she just *did it*) enough to say, "Merrill."

Garrett has the gall to look baffled by this, cocking his head like a confused mabari. Maybe he can't wrap his brain around the idea that a woman who knows Garrett might prefer Carver. To be fair, it's never happened before.

But Carver's not being fair. He's a bit of a tit about it, actually. "Just because you can't tell that sanctimonious arsehole you want *his* stupid face on *your* stupid face doesn't mean everybody else is as pathetic."

“Suppose not,” Garrett says. It’s worse when Carver says something stupid and *doesn’t* manage to rile him. “Have fun. Stay safe. Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do.”

“That leaves most things,” Carver reminds him.

“Don’t do anything Mother wouldn’t do?”

“That leaves nearly nothing.”

Garrett waves a hand. “Find a happy medium between those two suggestions, then.”

“I’ll do my best,” Carver scoffs.

Carver’s not sure which of those categories his evening plans fall closer to.

When he gets to Merrill’s little house in the alienage, he can see light coming through the windows. He knocks, and in the moment before the door opens, he’s terrified he’s got the wrong night.

But she’s there, smiling up at him with her big round eyes and her secretive little grin. She’s pulled her hair back out of her face with a wooden barrette he’s never seen her wear, flat and round with a carving that looks a little like her face tattoos. Her... valla—something. He knows they’ve a name, but he feels like if he asks her *again* he’ll just seem stupid.

"Carver!" she says, as if she's so incredibly pleased it's him at her door. "Come in, I made some tea—I got it from Varric and not from the market in the alienage, so it doesn't taste like medicine."

She's right, it just tastes like tea leaves, strong and black. It's calming, because it's the sort of thing Bethany used to like to drink, but Carver thinks he probably shouldn't be thinking about Bethany while they're about to... to... do whatever it is they're going to do. What exactly *are* they going to do?

He feels very stupid asking, and very conscious of the coils of braided rope Merrill has stacked in a little pyramid on her table. The bottom ones are

thicker than the top ones, but the ropes themselves are all the same width, so it must just be longer pieces of them bound up together. They're not like sailors' ropes, which are thick, bristled, and covered with pitch to keep the water out. They're a soft brown, and very even, with no fraying.

"We can do whatever it is you like," Merrill says. "You can really get quite complicated with it—if you have a sturdy tree, you can hang somebody from it, and that's very fun, sort of weightless, like you're a bird—except a bird that is tied in place. So not like a bird at all. Perhaps like a wind chime." Her hands are like birds, fluttering about as she thinks aloud. "I do not think you could do that in here."

"I don't trust your overhead beams, no," Carver agrees. "I suppose I just don't understand where, uh, exactly, it becomes..." he's really trying for words that don't sound utterly idiotic, but somehow he ends up saying, "...a sex thing?"

She winds her fingers together, lacing one over the other all the way across her knuckles. "It doesn't have to be," she said. "It depends on what you'd like."

"And on what you'd like. I mean. If you'd not like that with me."

He doesn't realize he's voicing the depths of his anxieties until she unlocks her fingers and puts one hand over his and says, "that's not a concern for me."

"*Really?*"

"You're so surprised!"

"Well—it's just—" he cuts himself off with a sigh, hand curling into a fist on her table, knuckles grating against the wood. "Nobody's ever just *said* that to me. Listen, when I was growing up, I always thought sex was for people who were really in love, like my mum and dad."

She wrinkles her nose a little bit, which he supposes he ought to expect, considering he's talking about his parents and that isn't very sexy at all.

“I’m just not used to the idea that it’s not some big serious thing, that it’s just... fun.” He groaned, collapsing forward onto the table with his head in his arms. “I’m really making a mess of this, aren’t I?”

“Not *at-all*,” she says, patting his hand and then his head. She doesn’t scruff his hair the way Garrett does, just kind of strokes it. “If this is something that’s important to you—that you want to do with somebody you really love and are committed to, we don’t have to. Well. Unless you have something to tell me about your feelings on *me*, which I have to say, may be a bit awkward.”

He found himself laughing despite his anxieties. “No, Merrill, I’m not about to confess that I’ve been madly in love with you all along. Just that I’m still interested in sex even though I’m not in love.”

“Oh, good, for a moment there I was worried I was being quite insensitive.” She kept petting his hair, and he leaned into the gentle scrape of her fingernails over his scalp. “We’ll keep your trousers on this time, though. Just in case you decide you don’t want that.”

He doesn't quite understand that, because what exactly's the point of this if it's *not* sex, but he doesn't want to keep questioning because the way she's touching him is making his body itch to be touched *more*.

So he lets her tie him up.

(After they negotiate until they finish their tea, of course.)

She rambles while she does it, and that in itself is kind of calming. It's the usual Merrill effect. She tells him how the Qunari also do something like this, that she's seen warriors down at the docks with complicated knotwork over their arms and chests. It's ornamental for them, not restrictive, but she wonders whether the Dalish inspired them to do it.

She told him before they started that at any point he can ask and she'll let him go. That she's not going to do anything *too* complicated or put him in any position that's *too* uncomfortable. He's kneeling on the rug in the middle of the main room of her house, and he's glad they're not in her

bedroom. There's that big fucking mirror in her bedroom and he'd feel weird seeing himself like this.

Though, his eyes are closed, so even if the mirror was smack in front of him, he'd not see his own face.

He doesn't realize his breathing has gone shaky but slow until she yanks one of the lines she's tethering him with and it goes tight around his chest. He wonders vaguely what it looks like but he doesn't care to look down at himself. His heart has quickened pace, and when she ties his arms behind his back, he tenses, almost struggling, and realizes that it holds.

Merrill is such a tiny person—she comes up to his chest and she's so slim you'd lose her if she turned sideways. She has delicate little caster's hands, but they're strong enough to subdue him like this. And he likes it. He normally hates giving up control, because he has so little of it in the first place, but this... this isn't really giving up control, is it? If he asked her to stop, she would. If he asks her to cut him free, she has a curved little knife that's dull on one side to keep from cutting skin.

He's hard, but it's secondary. This isn't fear unbridled and turning into passion, the panicked frenzy of a first time he described days ago at the Hanged Man. This is like an anchor, wrapped round him and pulled tight, keeping him steady.

“Is that all right?”

It takes him a long moment to drag his senses to working order and realize she's talking to him and she wants an answer this time. “Yeah.” He doesn't open his eyes. “S good.”

"I'll leave you like this for a little bit, then. You remember to tell me about any pins and needles?"

"Not yet," he says. No, he just feels warm and *good*. There's a chill to the night, thanks to more than a few holes in the walls, but he's hot enough just from *this*. He can't even feel the cold air.

"Still alright with me touching you while you're like this?"

He's been reduced to silence, so he just nods. She asked him before where she could touch him, and he said, '*anywhere*' which prompted her to gently tell him she didn't mind if he had limits, and in fact she would appreciate if he told her so that she could respect them. All he could come up with, because he couldn't imagine a part on him he wouldn't want Merrill to touch, was, '*not my throat.*' He's not even sure why he'd rather avoid that.

She starts with his hair, standing behind him. It's not the gentle petting she gave him before—she grips hard enough to tug his head back until his crown leans against the softness of her belly. He can feel her breathing through the loose tunic she's wearing. Even though he isn't bothered by the cold, her body is a point of warmth. Her hands push his hair back from his face, then trace the edges of it, cheekbones down to his jaw. She cradles his jaw, fingers sweeping down until they reach the point his hair is neatly trimmed into at the base of his neck.

As promised, she avoids his throat. She squeezes his shoulders, over where the ropes are pressing in. She's saying something to him, but it's fuzzy and muted, soft and sweet. He thinks she's telling him he's doing well. It's got the cadence of praise.

She kneels down behind him. She's surprisingly sturdy—he doesn't have the presence of mind to keep himself from leaning back against her but when he does it she holds him steady, wraps her arms around him and hooks her fingers through the latticework of rope she's made over his chest. It's affection he doesn't have to respond to. He *can't* respond to it, because his arms are tied behind his back and there's no way to return an embrace. It's as if she's taken all his clumsiness and put it away in a little box with a bow tied neatly atop.

She's up on her knees a little so she's still a little taller than him, and the side of her face presses against the side of his. He can feel the little wrapped braids in her hair, the way her ear twitches when his hair tickles it.

Her hands pass over his chest and his ribcage, gentle fingers on bare skin. He hears a high, strained *whine* and realizes it's *him*. He's hotter now, and

harder. His legs are tied so that he's stuck in a kneeling position but he shifts his knees wider and slumps down against her.

"Here, now?" she asks, passing over his thighs, hooking her fingers under the ropes bound around them. His feet are starting to go numb but she said that wasn't a problem as long as there wasn't pain shooting down his nerves.

He makes a little noise, a complaint.

"Or, no. You want me here, don't you?"

When he finally opens his eyes it's to see her hands framing his crotch, so he has to close them again immediately. "*Fuck.*"

"Is that one a good expletive or a bad expletive?"

"*Yeah.* Good. Touch me."

Apparently the most he can manage a sentence is two words.

They talked about this beforehand, too. He said she could touch him over his clothes or under, and she seems like she's going with 'over'. He's not come in his trousers like this since he was much younger, and it was embarrassing, because he was *supposed* to finish things with the girl (a daughter of a traveling merchant who came through Lothing and liked Carver because Garrett was more interested in her brother and her options were limited).

Here, though, it doesn't matter, because it's not about trying to last long enough to get it in; she's already said she doesn't want that tonight. And he's not responsible for taking his clothes off, because he's restrained. This is just about accepting the way she makes him feel and letting her take him apart.

And *fuck*, her hands are clever.

If he had his full range of movement, he'd be bucking up into her touch, but he can't, so he just strains at the ropes as he tries to lift his hips but finds

himself trapped. She likes when he does this, or at the least, she rewards him for it. She strokes over him with her palm, his mind twisting itself around the reality that *Merrill* is touching his *cock*, a fact that'd have him scandalized at himself if it didn't feel so bloody good.

He's gonna *come*, and she's gonna watch him do it—not just that, she's *telling* him how much she wants it, in pretty little coos in his ear. “*That's it, you've done so well, look at you.*”

Might be a little fucked up that he's so weak just to being praised, that her lilting, sweet words get him off more than her hands do. He can't bring himself to care though, not when it feels this good.

Orgasm feels more... *shuddery* than usual, when he's forced to stay in place through it. He's quiet, mostly. Maybe a little groaning. She's petting his hair again, except now it's all sweaty and mussed.

She touches him as he comes down from it as much as she did when she worked him up to it, her hands just as steady even when he's not. The ropes unwind steadily, and he's not sure if he's happy to be freed or if he wishes she'd pull them tighter.

His feet *are* numb though, and he's glad for the chance to work feeling back into them.

“You did *ve-ry* well, Carver.”

He only laughs. She hands him a cup of water. He didn't realize he was so thirsty before. “I didn't do much of anything, did I?”

“Of course that isn't true!” She plops down next to him, her side against his. For the first time in a while she actually seems smaller than him. “If you weren't there I wouldn't have had anybody to tie up at all, would I?”

He'd still like to say that just sitting there wasn't doing much, but he's too comfortable to make any argument. His smallclothes are unfortunately damp, but he'll ask her to use her bathroom later. Right now, he can't bloody *move*.

Merrill winds her ropes back into those neat little bundles while Carver watches. He likes seeing the movement of it, the bright flashes of her red-painted fingernails over the fiber.

He can't believe how gentle she is to him in the aftermath of it all. If he was feeling his usual self, he'd probably say he's not a *girl*, he doesn't need *coddling*, but he's different right now. She sings while he's in the bathroom as if she wants him to know she's still there.

They lie in her bed together—rather, Carver lies down and Merrill sits at the head of the bed and lets him put his head in her lap. This is another intimacy he's unaccustomed to. She tells him a story about a halla, or the dread wolf, or something inherently Dalish that brings out her elvhen accent, and he can't really focus on the words but he does love the cadence of her voice.

He doesn't stay the night. Doesn't know if that's what you're supposed to do after sex. Doesn't even know if what they did *was* sex, because he was still in his clothes and he was the only one who came, anyhow. (He asked Merrill if she wanted to come, she said no, that's alright. He's still not sure if she's doubting his abilities or if she actually *does* think it's alright, but he didn't argue.)

But Mother would worry if he was out all night without Garrett, and Gamlen would probably say something cheeky and disgusting. It's a short walk, anyway.

When he gets home, gets into the bunk he shares with Garrett, his brother (the arse) asks, "how's Merrill?"

Carver tells him to get stuffed, and elbows him right in the sternum for his troubles.

"Ow—dammit—I hope you were more of a gentleman with *her*," Garrett says.

"I was perfectly respectable." Carver considers leaving it at that, but it's far more fun to look over his shoulder and watch the face Garrett makes when

Carver says, “*she* wasn’t, though.”

Author's Note:

Please note that after this occasion they do this again several times and Merrill eventually gets to the point where she fingers Carver til he sees god. This was just already over 4,000 words and I didn't wanna do another scene.

Find me on twitter [@luddlestons](#) or my nsfw twitter [@luddlessmut](#) or on my tumblr [@luddlestons](#) When I'm not writing dragon age fics in the year of our lord 2022, I'm working on a romance novel about the Trojan War.